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LOCAL OPTION AND ITS RESULTS IN OHIO AND GEORGIA

OHIO

BY THE LATE MRS. ANNIE W. CLARK,
Former President, Ohio Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

Ohio has four local option laws. The "Township" law by which 25 per cent of the qualified electors of a township, exclusive of any incorporated village or city in such township, may by petition require a special election to be held, and a majority vote to exclude saloons makes it unlawful to traffic in intoxicating liquors in such townships. New elections can be held, on new petition, not oftener than once in two years.

Many good people were inclined for a time to ridicule this law as merely an effort to keep saloons away from farms, but the value of the law became apparent later when saloons voted out of towns began to locate just over the corporation line in the township.

The second local option law, enacted in April, 1902, called the "Beal" law, was secured after a ten years' struggle.

Under that law 40 per cent of the electors in any municipal corporation, by petition, can require a special election to be called to determine whether the liquor traffic shall be excluded from such municipality, a majority vote at the election deciding the question. New elections are permitted not oftener than once in two years.

In April, 1904, a third local option law was passed, called the "Brannock" law, providing for elections in residence districts of cities, the boundaries of the districts to be set forth in the petition. March 15, 1906, the Brannock bill was set aside by the passage of the Jones law, which makes residence districts in cities "dry" on petition of a majority of the voters in such districts without holding an election.

The county option law, passed in 1908, or the Rose bill provides that whenever thirty-five per cent of the qualified electors of any county shall petition the commissioners or any common pleas judge of such county for the privilege to determine by ballot whether the sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage shall be

prohibited within the limits of such county, such commissioners or common pleas judge shall order a special election to be held in not less than twenty, nor more than thirty, days from the filing of such petition with the commissioners or common pleas judge. The result of such election shall forthwith be entered upon the record of the proceedings of the commissioners, and with the clerk of the common pleas court. If this record shows a majority cast against the sale, it shall be *prima facie* evidence that the selling, furnishing or giving away of intoxicating liquors as a beverage shall within thirty days from the day of holding the election be prohibited and unlawful.

If a county having dry towns, votes wet, the dry towns remain dry. If a county having wet towns votes dry, the wet towns become dry. Penalty for violation of law is not more than \$200 nor less than \$50 for the first offense and for any subsequent offense not more than \$500 nor less than \$200. On conviction of a second or subsequent offense, the court shall order the place where liquor is sold, furnished or given away, abated as a nuisance or bond the person convicted for \$1,000, not to violate the law. This goes into effect September 1, 1908.¹

By the enactment of those laws, the policy of the state in regard to the liquor traffic has been settled at least until the plan is fully tested. The people are to exercise the ancient and inherent right of local self-government in dealing with the question.

One good feature of the plan is that the special election separates the subject from partisan politics; another is that the campaign and election on a single issue of saloon or no saloon, secures the attention of the people to the one subject, induces voters to read, talk, consider and line-up on that issue; another is that when a majority is obtained against the saloon the prohibition is pretty sure to be reasonably well enforced.

Under these laws temperance sentiment is increasing. Prosperous prohibition towns help to win votes in other towns. It is possible to go right on and free the state entirely from the liquor traffic without further legislation, but it is probable that when the

¹Up to October 6, thirty counties had voted for no license and thus eliminated nearly 900 saloons. It is announced that twenty other counties are to vote upon the license question before January 1, 1909. The figures given below regarding the number of townships, villages and cities that have eliminated the saloon do not include the places that have been voted "dry" since the 1st of September, 1908.
—(Statement made October 7, by the Editor.)

work has progressed until a majority of the legislators are from "dry" counties short work will be made of the traffic by a general prohibitory law so worded as to be enforceable.

The most important question at present is, shall the work be pushed with ever-increasing vigor or shall it drag? Shall the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in a dry town or county rest from its labors and leave those less fortunate to work out their own problem, or shall all its unions redouble their efforts and work with increasing energy until every township, town and city, has a majority against the iniquitous saloon. A survey of the situation may help to decide this question.

By the last federal census (1900), Ohio had four million population, one-half living on farms and in villages of less than three thousand; one-quarter in towns of from three to five thousand and cities of less than fifty thousand. The remaining quarter in our five largest cities—Dayton, Columbus, Toledo, Cincinnati and Cleveland.

The increase of population is largely in cities, and at the present rate of increase it is probable that one-half or more of our population will be in our sixty-six cities by the next decennial census.

What has been accomplished by local option? Of our 1,271 townships 1,150 are dry, and of the 768 incorporated villages and cities 500 were dry in March, 1908. Under the Jones law many resident districts in our larger cities have gone dry. One-half our population is now free from saloons near their homes.

The saloon is not an irresistible power even in the largest cities. It merely requires more effort to get a majority, more time for educational work. Enough has already been accomplished to prove that with proper effort majorities can be secured against the liquor traffic in every city. Ohio has thirty-six towns with populations ranging from 3,000 to 5,000, viz:

Athens, Ashland, Barnesville, Bryan, Barberton, Bellevue, Bridgeport, Collinwood, Cresline, Cuyahoga Falls, Dennison, Delphos, Eaton, Greenfield, Hillsboro, Jackson, Kent, Lakewood, Lisbon, Logan, London, Madisonville, Marysville, Mingo Junction, Miamisburg, North Baltimore, Oberlin, Pomeroy, Ravenna, Shawnee, Shelby, Toronto, Uhrichsville, Upper Sandusky, Wapakoneta and Wilmington.

Of the above, Ashland, Athens, Barnesville, Greenfield, Hillsboro, Lakewood, Oberlin and Wilmington are dry.

The cities under 20,000 at last census were: Alliance, Ashtabula, Bellaire, Bellefontaine, Bowling Green, Bucyrus, Cambridge, Chillicothe, Canal Dover, Circleville, Conneaut, Coshocton, Defiance, Delaware, Elyria, East Liverpool, Fostoria, Findlay, Fremont, Glenville, Ironton, Kenton, Lancaster, Lorain, Martin's Ferry, Middletown, Mansfield, Marietta, Marion, Massillon, Mt. Vernon, Newark, Nelsonville, New Philadelphia, Niles, Norwalk, Piqua, Painesville, Portsmouth, Salem, St. Mary's, Steubenville, Sidney, Troy, Tiffin, Van Wert, Warren, Washington Court House, Wellston, Wellsville, Wooster and Xenia.

Of the above, Cambridge (now over 13,000 population) has voted dry twice; Glenville is dry, but part of Glenville has lately been annexed to Cleveland; Washington Court House voted dry, though great frauds were perpetrated at the election in the interest of the saloons; Xenia, now over 10,000 population, has voted dry twice. Mt. Vernon went dry and two years later went wet. It will be redeemed the next time. Wooster has recently voted "dry."

We have eight cities ranging from 20,000 to 50,000, viz., East Liverpool, which is dry, Sandusky, Lima, Hamilton, Zanesville, Canton, Springfield, Akron and Youngstown, everyone of which can be made dry, as East Liverpool was, under the Beal law, provided the proper methods are used and enough organized workers determine it shall be done. What has been accomplished in one or more may be secured in all of the others if proper steps are taken to educate against the saloon and to organize for the struggle.

The remaining cities are Dayton, having about 100,000; Columbus and Toledo, each expecting to show 200,000 in the next census; Cincinnati and Cleveland, each expecting to pass the one-half million mark in 1910. All except Dayton have dry districts under the Brannock law, and all have a patriotic citizenship that only needs to be reached and convinced of its duty to join the great movement for better things. The main difficulty is that so many people have been led to believe that it is hopeless to resist the power of breweries, distillers, wholesale liquor stores, and hundreds or thousands of saloons, with their money and their allies. That makes it hard to secure proper and sufficient organization to do the work. But in fact the proportion of liquor stores and saloons, and of saloon-

influenced voters, to the total population, is not much greater in a large city than in any other town.

It is a well-known fact that Ohio cities have about the same kind of people, about the same proportion in each of shop-workers, foreign-born, church members, drinking men, *et cetera*.

No town or city in the entire list is much more difficult to put into the dry column than Cambridge was when the Beal law passed. It has steel mills, tin-plate mill, glass factories, potteries, railroad shops, coal mines nearby, a brewery in the midst, a full proportion of foreign-born men.

One of two things will now come to pass.

If the temperance forces fail now to make the effort needed, fail to secure organization, the distribution of reading matter, and the house to house work, necessary to a rapid increase of temperance sentiment in our large towns and cities, the people will gradually settle down to a conviction that it is a hopeless task, and we will lose rather than gain in supporters, and perhaps witness the return of the saloon in many of the places now dry.

If, on the other hand, the temperance forces are alive to the present opportunity, and give the opposition no time to recover from the staggering blows lately given, if the up-to-date literature needed is produced and goes into the homes, and we promptly organize for greater victory, the end of the open saloon in Ohio is at hand. Without open saloons, scientific temperance instruction in the schools, untrammeled by school officials subservient to the liquor traffic, will soon make the great mass of our people total abstainers from intelligent choice, and end forever the traffic in and practice of using intoxicating drinks and other narcotic poisons.

GEORGIA

BY MARY HARRIS ARMOR,
President Georgia Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

After a hard fought battle the Georgia prohibitionists secured a county local option law in 1883. At that time our registration laws were so lax that there was practically no restraint upon the

ignorant, vicious and purchasable voter. Prohibition, too, was an experiment; so, at first, it was with great difficulty that a battle was won; but the battle being won the beneficent results immediately began to appear. More and better schools and churches were built, more people owned their homes, and those who had homes before improved them. Industries sprang up, the population increased and property increased in value. I have never known of a single instance where such results did not follow the exclusion of the saloon.

The law was so framed at first, that an election could be called every two years. This was changed after a few years so that an election could be called only every four years. Ample proof of the blessing that was conferred by voting dry is given in the fact that in twenty-four years, of the more than a hundred counties that "went dry" under local option, not more than a dozen ever called another election and not more than a half dozen of these repudiated prohibition. The few that did so, with the exception of two, called another election at the earliest opportunity and voted the saloon out forever. Others were preparing to do so when the passage of a state prohibition law—by a majority of 34 to 7 in the senate, and 139 to 39 in the house—rendered it unnecessary.

Our state prohibition law was the direct result of local option, for when we had 126 dry counties out of 146, it was an easy matter to elect a "dry" legislature. Thus local option brought to the people of Georgia a large measure of peace and prosperity, and ultimately state-wide prohibition.